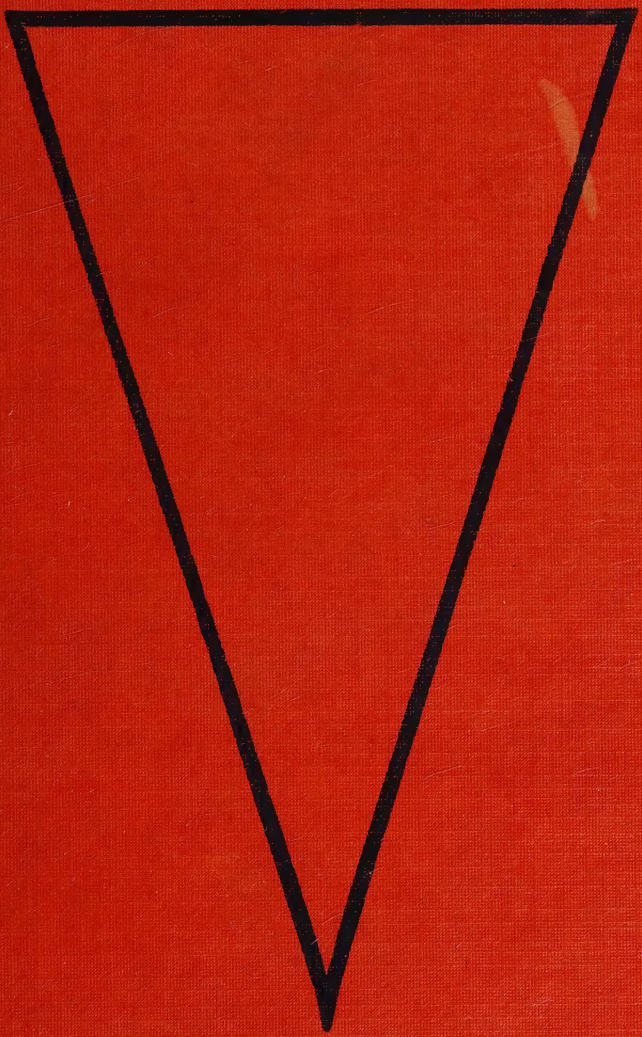
BLUEBEARD



CLIFTON JOHNSON

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BEDTIME WONDER TALES

BLUEBEARD

BY

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The books in this series of Bedtime Wonder Tales are made up of favorite stories from the folklore of all nations. Such stories are particularly enjoyed by children from four to twelve years of age. As here told they are free from the savagery, distressing details, and excessive pathos which mar many of the tales in the form that they have come down to us from a barbaric past. But there has been no sacrifice of the simplicity and humor and sweetness that give them perennial charm.

The sources of the stories in this volume are as follows: Page 11, France; 24, Grimm; 36, England; 49, Hindustan; 58, Italy; 78, Germany; 90, Scotland; 103, Japan.

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BLUEBEARD
AND OTHER FOLKLORE STORIES

I

BLUEBEARD

ONCE upon a time—but it was a long while ago; so long, indeed, that the oldest oaks in our forests were not yet acorns on the bough —there was a man who lived in a splendid house and had dishes of gold and silver, chairs and sofas covered with flowered satin, and curtains of the richest silk. But, alas! this man was so unlucky as to have a blue beard, which made him look so frightfully ugly that the first impulse of every woman and girl he met was to run away from him.

In the same vicinity lived a lady of quality who had two beautiful daughters, and he

wished to marry one of them. He was even willing to let the lady decide which of the two it should be.

Neither of the daughters, however, would have him, and the lady sighed to think of her children's obstinacy in refusing to become the mistress of such a magnificent mansion. But they were not able to make up their minds to marry a man with a blue beard. Their aversion was increased by the fact that he already had had several wives, and no one knew surely what had become of them, though many were the excuses he made to account for their disappearance.

At length Bluebeard, in order to cure the dislike of the lady's daughters, invited them and their mother and some young friends to spend a whole week at his house. They came, and nothing was thought of but feasting, dancing, and music, and parties for hunting and fishing.

The guests were loaded with costly gifts and were so delightfully entertained that before many days had passed, Fatima, the younger of the two sisters, began to imagine that the beard, which she had thought was dreadfully ugly was not so *very* blue after all. By the end of the week the kindness of her host had made such an impression that she concluded it would be a pity to refuse to become his wife on account of the trifling circumstance of his having a blue beard.

So they were married shortly afterward, and at first everything went well. A month passed, and one morning Bluebeard told Fatima that he must go on a journey which would take him away for at least six weeks. He kissed her affectionately, gave her the keys of the whole mansion, and bade her amuse herself in any manner that she pleased while he was gone.

"But, my dear," he added, in concluding, "I would have you notice among the keys the small one of polished steel. It unlocks the little room at the end of the long corridor. Go where you will and do what you choose, except in the matter of that one room, which I forbid your entering."

Fatima promised faithfully to obey his orders, and she watched him get into his carriage while she stood at the door of the mansion waving her hand to him as he drove away.

Lest she should be lonesome during her husband's absence, she invited numerous guests to keep her company. Most of them had not dared to venture into the house while Bluebeard was there, but now they came without any urging or delay, eager to see its splendors.

They ran about upstairs and downstairs, peeping into the closets and wardrobes, ad-

miring the rooms, and exclaiming over the beauties of the tapestries, sofas, cabinets, and tables, and of the mirrors in which they could see themselves from head to foot. With one consent they praised what they saw, and envied the good fortune of their friend, the mistress of all this magnificence.

She went around unlocking the doors for their convenience until the only door that remained untouched was that of the obscure room at the end of the long corridor. She wondered why she had been forbidden to enter that room. What was there in it? Even if she did go in, her husband need never know that she had done so.

The more she thought about it the more curious she became. Finally she left her guests and hurried along the dark narrow passage that led to the forbidden room. At the door she hesitated, recalling her husband's command, and fearful of his anger;

but the temptation was too strong, and she tremblingly opened the door.

The window shutters were closed and the light was so dim that at first she could see nothing. However, her eyes gradually became used to the dusk and she discovered that on the floor lay the bodies of all the wives Bluebeard had married.

Fatima uttered a cry of horror, her strength left her, and she thought she would die from fear. The key of the room fell from her hand, but she picked it up, hastily retreated to the corridor, and locked the door.

Yet she could not forget what she had seen, and when she returned to her guests her mind was too disturbed for her to attend to their comfort, or to attempt to entertain them. One by one they bade their hostess good-by and went home, until no one was left with her but her sister Anne.

II

THE BLOOD-STAINED KEY

After all the guests had gone, Fatima noticed a spot of blood on the key of the fatal room. She tried to wipe it off, but the spot remained. Then she washed the key with soap and scoured it with sand, but her efforts were in vain, for it was a magic key, and only Bluebeard himself had the power to remove the stain. At last she decided not to put it with the other keys, but to hide it, hoping her husband would not miss it.

Bluebeard returned unexpectedly that very evening. He said a horseman had met him on the road and told him that the business which had taken him from home had been satisfactorily settled so there was no need of his making the long journey.

Fatima tried to welcome her husband with every appearance of pleasure, but all the time she was dreading the moment when he should ask for the keys. This he did not do until the following morning. Then she gave them to him with such a blanched face and shaking hand that he easily guessed what had happened.

"Why have you not brought me the key of the little room?" he asked sternly.

"I must have left it on my table upstairs," she faltered.

"Bring it to me at once," Bluebeard said, and she was forced to go and make a pretence of searching for it.

When she dared delay no longer, she went to her husband and surrendered the key. He immediately demanded the cause of the stain on it, and she hesitated, at a loss what reply to make.

"But why need I ask?" he shouted. "I

know the meaning of it right well. You have disobeyed my commands and have been into the room I ordered you not to enter. So you shall go in again, madam, but you will never return. You shall take your place among the ladies you saw there."

Fatima fell on her knees at his feet weeping and begging for mercy, but the cruel man had a heart like a stone, and he told her to prepare for death.

"Since I must die," she said, "at least grant me a little time to say my prayers."

"I will give you ten minutes, but not one moment more," Bluebeard responded.

Poor Fatima hastened to a little turret chamber whither her sister had fled in terror and grief. "Sister Anne!" she cried, "go up to the top of the tower and see if our two brothers are coming. They promised to visit me today. If they should be in sight beckon them to come quickly."

So the sister climbed the narrow staircase that led to the top of the tower. No sooner did she finish the ascent than Fatima called from below, "Anne, Sister Anne, do you see any one coming?"

Anne replied sadly, "I see nothing but the sun shining and the grass growing tall and green."

Several times Fatima put the same question and each time she received the same answer.

Meanwhile Bluebeard was waiting with a scimitar in one hand and his watch in the other. At length he shouted in a fierce voice: "The ten minutes are almost gone! Make an end to your prayers!"

"Anne, Sister Anne!" Fatima called softly, "look again. Is there no one on the road?"

"I see a cloud of dust rising in the distance," Anne answered.

"Perchance it is made by our brothers," Fatima said.

"Alas! no, my dear sister," Anne responded. "The dust has been raised by a flock of sheep."

"Fatima!" Bluebeard roared, "I command you to come down."

"One moment—just one moment more!" the wretched wife sobbed.

Then she called, "Anne, Sister Anne, do you see any one coming?"

"I see two horsemen riding in this direction," Anne replied, "but they are a great way off."

"They must be our brothers," Fatima said. "Heaven be praised! Oh, sign to them to hasten!"

By this time the enraged Bluebeard was howling so loud for his wife to come down that his voice shook the whole mansion. Fatima dared delay no longer, and she de-

scended to the great hall, threw herself at her wicked husband's feet, and once more begged him to spare her life.

"Silence!" Bluebeard cried. "Your entreaties are wasted! You shall die!"

He seized her by the hair and raised his scimitar to strike. At that moment a loud knocking was heard at the gates, and Bluebeard paused with a look of alarm.

Anne had run down to let the brothers in, and they hurried to the hall, flung open the door, and appeared with swords ready drawn in their hands. They rushed at Bluebeard, and one rescued his sister from her husband's grasp while the other gave the wretch a sword-thrust that put an end to his life.

So the wicked Bluebeard perished, and Fatima became mistress of all his riches. Part of her wealth she bestowed on her sister, Anne, and part on her two brothers.

The rest she retained herself, and presently she married a man whose kind treatment helped her to forget her unfortunate experience with Bluebeard.

III

A GOBLIN IN A BOTTLE

ONCE upon a time there was a poor woodcutter who worked from daylight to dark, and as he spent little he saved some money. He had an only son, and one day he said to him: "This money which I have earned by the sweat of my brow shall be spent on your education. Go to school and learn something useful that you may be able to support me in my old age when my limbs become so stiff that I am obliged to sit at home."

The son went away to a great school and was very industrious and made excellent progress. He had been at the school a long time, but had not learned all that was to be learned when his father's store of money

was exhausted, and he was obliged to come home.

"I can give you no more," his father said sadly, "for in these dear times I am scarcely able to earn my daily bread."

"Make yourself easy as to that, my good father," the son responded. "I will suit myself to the times."

When the father was about to go to the forest to chop, the son said, "I will go with you and help."

"Ah! but you have never been used to such hard work," the father objected. "You must not attempt it. Besides, I have only one ax and no money to buy another."

"Go and ask your neighbor to lend you an ax till I have earned enough to buy one for myself," the son said.

So the father borrowed an ax, and he and the scholar went together to the forest, where the young man helped with the work

and was very lively and merry. About noon, when the sun stood right over their heads, the father sat down to rest for a while and eat his dinner.

The scholar, however, took his share of bread and said: "I am not tired. I will go a little deeper into the forest and look for birds' nests."

"Oh, you silly fellow!" his father exclaimed, "why do you want to run about? You will get so weary you will not be able to raise your arm. Keep quiet a bit and sit down here with me."

But the young man would not do that. He went off among the trees eating his bread and peeping about among the bushes for nests. To and fro he wandered until he came to an immense hollow oak tree. The tree was certainly hundreds of years old, and five men taking hold of hands could not have reached around it.

The scholar had stopped to look at this great tree thinking that many a bird's nest must be built within its hollow trunk when he fancied he heard a voice. He listened and there came to his ears a half-smothered cry of "Let me out!"

He looked around, but could see no one. Indeed, it seemed to him that the voice came from the ground. So he called, "Where are you?"

The voice replied, "Here I am among the roots of the oak tree. Let me out! Let me out!"

The scholar therefore began to search at the foot of the tree where the roots spread. Finally in a little hollow, he found a glass bottle. He picked it up and held it so he could look through toward the light. Then he perceived a thing inside shaped like a frog which kept jumping up and down.

"Let me out! Let me out!" the thing

cried again; and the scholar, not suspecting any evil, drew the stopper from the bottle.

Immediately the little creature sprang forth, and it grew and grew until in a few moments it stood before the scholar a frightful goblin half as tall as the oak tree. "Do you know what your reward is for letting me out of that glass bottle?" the goblin cried with a voice of thunder.

"No," the scholar answered without fear, "how should I?"

"Then I will tell you that I must break your neck," the goblin announced.

"You should have told me that before," the scholar said, "and you would have stayed where you were. But my head will remain on my shoulders in spite of you, for there are several people's opinions to be asked yet about this matter."

"Keep your people out of my way," the goblin snarled. "I was shut up in that bot-

tle for a punishment, and I have been kept there for such a length of time that I long ago vowed I would kill whoever let me out for not coming to release me sooner. So I shall break your neck."

"Softly, softly!" the scholar responded, "that is quicker said than done. I don't know whether to believe your word or not. You told me you were in that bottle. But how could such a giant as you are get into so small a space? Prove that you spoke the truth by retiring into the bottle, and afterward do what you please with me."

Full of pride, the goblin boasted, "I can easily furnish you the proof you ask"; and he shrank and shrank until he was as small as before. Then he crept back into the bottle.

Instantly the scholar replaced the stopper, and put the bottle once more where it had been among the oak roots. He picked

up his ax and was about to go back to his father when the goblin cried lamentably: "Oh, let me out! Do let me out."

"No, not a second time," the scholar said. "I shall not give you a chance to take my life again in a hurry, after I have got you safe."

"Free me," the goblin pleaded, "and I will give you wealth that will last you your life-time."

"No, no, you will only deceive me!" the scholar declared.

"You are disregarding your own best interests," the goblin said. "Instead of harming you I will reward you richly."

"Well, I will hazard letting him out," the scholar thought, "for he may after all keep his word."

Then he addressed the goblin, saying: "I will release you. See to it that you do as you have promised."

So he removed the stopper and the goblin jumped out and soon became as big as before. "Now you shall have your reward," the monster said, and he reached the scholar a little piece of rag. "Apply that to a wound, and the wound will at once heal," he explained; "or touch it to iron and the iron will change to silver."

"I will try it," the scholar responded, and he went to the oak tree and slashed off a piece of bark with his ax. Then he touched the place with the rag, and immediately the wound closed up as if the bark had never been gashed at all.

"That is quite satisfactory," the scholar said. "Now we can separate."

"I thank you for releasing me," the goblin remarked as he turned away.

"And I thank you heartily for your present," the scholar said.

IV

A SCHOLAR'S FORTUNE

After parting from the goblin, the young man went back to his father, who asked:

"Where have you been roaming so long?"

"You have neglected your work. I was quite certain you would do nothing of this kind well."

"Be contented," was the son's response, "I will make up the lost time. Watch me while I cut down this tree at one blow."

He rubbed his ax with the magic rag, and gave the tree a powerful blow, but because the ax-head had been changed into silver the edge turned over.

"Ah, Father!" the son exclaimed, "do you see how poor an ax you have given me?"

"What have you done?" the father cried.

"That ax was borrowed, and you have ruined it. I must pay for it, but I know not how I shall do so."

"Don't be troubled," the son said. "I will soon pay for the ax."

"Why, you simpleton! how will you do that?" his father retorted. "You have nothing but what I give you. Some student nonsense is stuck in your head. Of wood-cutting you know nothing."

"Well, Father," the son said, "I can work no more today now that my ax is spoiled. Let us make a holiday of the few hours that remain before sunset."

"Eh, what?" his father cried, "do you think I can keep my hands in my pockets as you do? You can go home, but I must keep on with the chopping."

"No," the son objected, "you must come, too, for this is the first time I have been in the forest, and I do not know the way out."

At last he persuaded his father to accompany him. After they reached home the son took the damaged ax to a goldsmith in a neighboring town. "This ax-head is silver," the scholar told him. "I want to sell it."

The goldsmith tested it to make sure of the quality of the metal, weighed it, and said, "Your ax is worth one hundred dollars, but I have not so much money in the shop."

"Give me what you have," the scholar requested, "and I will trust you for the rest."

So the goldsmith gave him eighty dollars, and the scholar tramped back home. "Father," he said, "I have some money now. Do you know what we will have to pay our neighbor to make good the loss of his ax?"

"Yes," the father answered, "the ax was nearly new, and it cost him a dollar."

"Then give him two dollars," the son said. "He will have no regrets when he gets

double payment. Here are fifty dollars. Pay our neighbor and keep the rest for yourself. You shall live at your ease in future and never want again."

"My goodness!" the man exclaimed, "where did you get this money?"

The son told everything that had happened. He now could easily procure all the money he pleased, and the first use he made of his wealth was to return to school and learn as much as he could. Afterward, because he could heal all wounds with his rag, he became the most celebrated surgeon in the world.

V

YALLERY BROWN

ONCE upon a time there was a lad about eighteen years old named Tom Tiver who had hired out to work for a farmer. One beautiful Sunday night in July he was walking across a field. The weather was warm and still, and the air was full of little sounds as if the trees and grasses were softly chattering to themselves.

But all at once there came from on ahead the most pitiful wailings that ever he had heard—a sobbing as of a child spent with fear and nearly heartbroken. Soon the sound changed to a moan, and then rose again in a long whimpering wailing that made Tom sick to hark to it. He began to look everywhere for the poor creature.

"It must be Sally Barton's child," he thought. "She was always a flighty thing and never looks after it properly. Like as not she's flaunting about the lanes, and has clean forgot the baby."

He looked and looked, yet he could see nought. Meanwhile the whimpering got louder and stronger and there seemed to be words of some sort mingled with the sobs. Tom harkened with all his ears, and heard the unhappy creature saying: "Oh! the stone, the great big stone! Oh! the stone on top!"

He wondered where the stone might be, and he looked until he found, close to a hedge, a great flat stone almost buried in the earth and hidden in the matted grass and weeds. Down he fell on his knees and listened again. Clearer than ever, but tired with crying came the little sobbing voice, "Oh! oh! the stone, the stone on top!"

Tom was scared, and he disliked to meddle with the thing, but he could not withstand the whimpering baby, and he tore like mad at the earth around the stone till he got his fingers under it and felt it loosening. Then a puff of warm air came out of the damp earth and the tangle of grass and growing things, and he tipped the stone back out of the way.

Underneath where it had been was a cavity, and there lay a tiny thing on its back blinking up at the moon and at him. It was no bigger than a year old baby, but it had a great mass of hair and a heavy beard, and the hair and the beard were so long and so twisted round and round the creature's body that Tom could not see its clothes. The hair was yellow and silky like a child's, but the face of the thing was as old as if it had not been young and smooth for hundreds of years. There were just wrinkles

and two bright black eyes set in a lot of shining yellow hair; and the skin was the color of fresh-turned earth in the spring—brown as brown could be—and its bare hands and feet were as brown as its face. The crying had stopped, but the tears were standing on its cheeks, and the tiny creature looked dazed in the moonshine and the night air.

When its eyes got used to the moonlight it looked boldly up in Tom's face and said: "Tom, you are a good lad."

The coolness with which it spoke was astonishing, and its voice was high and piping like the twittering of a little bird. Tom touched his hat, and tried to think what he ought to say.

"Hoots!" the thing exclaimed, "you needn't be afraid of me. You have done me a good turn, and I'll do as much for you."

Tom couldn't speak yet, but he thought, "Lord! for sure it's a bogle!"

The creature seemed to know what passed in Tom's mind, for it instantly said: "I'm no bogle, but you'd better not ask what I am. Anyhow, I am a good friend of yours."

Tom's knees smote together with terror. Certainly an ordinary body couldn't have known what he had been thinking, but the thing looked so kind and spoke so fair, that he made bold to say in a quavering voice, "Might I be asking to know your honor's name?"

"H'm!" the creature said, pulling its beard, "as for that, you may call me Yallery Brown. That's the way I look as you plainly see, and 'twill do for a name as well as any other. I am your friend, Yallery Brown, my lad."

"Thank you, master," Tom responded meekly.

"And now," it said, "I'm in a hurry to-night. So tell me without delay what I can

do for you. Would you like a wife? I can give you the finest lass in the town. Would you like riches? I can give you as much gold as you can carry. Or would you have me help you with your work? Only say the word."

Tom scratched his head. "I have no hankering for a wife," he said. "Wives are bothersome bodies, and I have women folk at home who will mend my clothes. Gold is worth having, but if you could lighten my work that would suit me best of all. I can't abide work, and I'll thank—"

"Stop!" Yallery Brown cried, as quick as lightning, "I'll help you and welcome, but if ever you thank me you'll never see me more. Remember that! I'll have no thanks"; and it stamped its tiny feet on the ground and looked as wicked as a raging bull. "Harken! you great lump!" it went on, calming down a bit. "If ever you need

help, or get into trouble, call on me. Just say, 'Yallery Brown, come from the earth, I want you!' and I'll be with you at once; and now, good night."

So saying, it picked a dandelion puff and blew the winged seeds all up into Tom's eyes and ears. When Tom could see again Yallery Brown was gone, and he would have thought he had been dreaming, were it not for the stone on end and the hole at his feet.

VI

A TROUBLESOME HELPER

Tom went home and to bed, and by morning he had nearly forgotten all about what had happened the previous evening. But when he went to start the day's work, there was none to do. The horses had been fed, the stables cleaned, and everything put in its proper place, and he had nothing to do but stand around with his hands in his pockets.

So it was from morn till night, and so it was on the days that followed. All Tom's work was done by Yallery Brown, and better done than Tom himself could do it. No matter how much the master gave Tom to do, he could sit down at his ease while the work did itself. The hoe, or broom, or whatever it was would get into motion with

no visible hand put to it and would finish the task in no time.

Yallery Brown kept out of sight during the day, but in the gray twilight, after the sun had gone down, Tom often saw the tiny creature hopping around like a Will-of-the-Wisp without a lantern.

At first Tom found it mighty fine to be relieved of his work. He had naught to do and good pay for it; but by and by things began to go wrong. His work continued to be done, but the work of the other lads was all undone. If his buckets were filled theirs were upset; if his tools were sharpened theirs were blunted and spoiled; if his horses were made as clean as daisies, theirs were splashed with muck, and so on.

Day in and day out it was the same. Naturally the lads began to have hard feelings toward Tom, and they would not speak to him or go near him, and they carried tales

to the master. So things went from bad to worse.

Tom could not work even if he wished to; the spade would not stay in his hand, the scythe escaped from his grip, and the plow ran away from him. More than once he tried his best to do his tasks so that Yallery Brown would leave him and his fellow laborers alone. But he couldn't, and he was compelled to sit by and look on and have the cold shoulder turned on him while the uncanny thing was meddling with the others and working for him.

At last matters got so bad that the master would keep Tom no longer, and if he had not discharged him the other lads would have left. They swore they would not stay on the same farm with him. Tom felt badly, for it was a good place; and he was very angry with Yallery Brown who had got him into such trouble.

So he shook his fist in the air and shouted as loud as he could, "Yallery Brown, come from the earth, you scamp, I want you!"

Hardly had the words left his lips when he felt something tweaking his leg behind, and he was pinched so hard that he jumped with the smart of it. He looked down and there was Yallery Brown with his shining hair and wrinkled face, and wicked glinting black eyes.

Tom was in a fine rage, and he would have liked to kick the ugly creature, but he restrained himself and said, "Look here, master, I'll thank you to leave me alone after this. Do you hear? I want none of your help, and I'll have nothing more to do with you."

The horrid thing broke into a screeching laugh, and pointed its brown finger at Tom. "Ho, ho, Tom!" it said, "you have thanked me, my lad, and I told you not to do so."

"But I don't want your help," Tom yelled. "I only want never to see you again, and to have nothing more to do with you. Now go."

The thing only laughed and screeched and mocked as long as Tom went on berating it, but as soon as his breath gave out it said with a grin: "Tom, my lad, I'll tell you something. Truly, I'll never help you again, and even if you call me you will not see me after today. But I never agreed to let you alone, and that I shall not do, my lad. I was where I could do no harm under that stone, Tom, and you let me out. If you had been wise I would have been your friend and worked for you, but I am your friend no longer, and in the future when everything goes crooked you can know that it is Yallery Brown's doing. Mark my words, will you?"

Then it began to sing and curse and call

down misfortunes on him, and it danced round Tom with its yellow hair and beard all flying and a savage scowl on its wrinkled bit of a face. Tom could only stand there shaking all over and staring down at the gruesome thing until at last it rose in the air and floated away on the wind over a wall out of sight with a parting shriek of cunning laughter.

In the days and weeks and years that followed Tom worked here and he worked there, and turned his hand to this and to that, but whatever he did always went wrong. There was no end to Yallery Brown's spite even until Tom's life ended.

VII

THE LITTLE JACKAL

ONCE upon a time a little jackal lived near the bank of a great river. Every day he went down to the water to catch the crabs that were there.

Not far away, in the same river, dwelt a cruel alligator. He saw the little jackal come down to the water every day, and he thought, "What a nice tender morsel that little jackal would make if I could only catch him!"

One day the alligator hid in the mud, where the water was shallow near shore. Only the tip of his nose stuck out, and that looked very much like the back of a crab.

Soon the little jackal came running along the bank of the river seeking his usual food.

When he saw the end of the alligator's nose he thought he had found a fine big crab, and he put in his paw to scoop it out of the mud.

The moment he did that, snap! the teeth of the alligator came together, and the jackal was caught by the paw. He was terribly frightened, for he knew the alligator intended to pull him into the river and eat him.

However, he began to laugh, though the alligator's teeth hurt him sadly. "Oh, you stupid old alligator!" he said. "You thought you would catch my paw, and instead caught a bulrush root that I stuck down in the water to tickle your nose. Ha, ha! you silly, silly alligator."

"Well, well," the alligator thought, "I am very much disappointed. I certainly supposed I had caught that little jackal. But it seems I have nipped nothing except a bulrush root. There is no use of holding

on to that." So he opened his mouth.

Then the little jackal snatched out his paw. "O stupid one!" he cried, "you really had caught me, and now you have let me go. Ha, ha! ring-a-ting, ring-a-ting! You'll never catch me again." So saying, off he ran up the bank and into the jungle.

The alligator was furiously angry. "I was tricked by the little rascal that time," he said, "but if I get hold of him again he will not escape so easily."

Once more the alligator hid in the mud and waited. But the little jackal came no more to the river. He was afraid, and he stayed in the woods living on figs that he gathered under a wild fig tree.

Day after day passed and it became plain to the alligator that the little jackal was avoiding the river. So early one morning he crawled out of the water and dragged himself to the wild fig tree. There he gath-

ered together a great heap of figs and hid under them.

Shortly afterward the jackal came running to the fig tree, licking his lips, for he was very hungry. At sight of the great heap of figs he was delighted. "Now I will not have the trouble of picking up the figs scattered about on the ground," he said. "Somebody has piled them up all ready for me. How nice!"

But when he went nearer he became suspicious, and thought, "It looks as though something might be hidden under those figs."

Then he cried out: "What is the matter here? Usually, when I come to the fig tree, all the figs that are any good roll about in the wind. Those figs in the pile lie so still that I doubt if they are fit to eat. I will have to go to some other place to get good figs."

The jackal's words made the alligator fear that he had failed again, and he thought: "This little jackal is very particular. I will just shake myself and make the figs roll about a trifle. Then he will come near enough for me to grab him."

So the alligator shook himself, and away rolled the figs in all directions.

"Oh, you stupid old alligator!" the jackal shouted; "if you had stayed still you might have caught me. Ring-a-ting, ring-a-ting! Thank you for shaking yourself and letting me know you were there!" Then away he ran as fast as his legs would carry him.

The alligator gnashed his teeth with rage. "Never mind! I will catch this little jackal yet," he declared, and he hid in the tall grass beside the path that led to the fig tree.

He waited there for several days, but he

saw nothing of his intended victim. The jackal was afraid to come to the fig tree any more. He stayed in the jungle and fed on such roots and berries as he could find there, but found so little that he grew thin and miserable.

One morning the alligator made his way to the jackal's house while the jackal was away. He squeezed in through the narrow doorway and hid under the heap of dead leaves that was the jackal's bed.

Toward evening the little jackal came running home. He was very hungry, for he had found scarcely anything to eat all day, and he was very tired too. Just as he was about to go in and lie down on his bed he noticed that the sides of the doorway were scraped and broken as if some big animal had forced its way through.

The little jackal was terribly frightened. He thought, "Is it possible that the wicked

alligator has come to hunt for me here in my own house and is waiting inside to catch me?"

Then he called loudly: "What is the matter, house of mine? Every day when I come home you say, 'All is well, little jackal,' but today you say nothing, and I am afraid to come in."

Of course the house did not really speak to him, but he wanted to find out if the alligator was there, and the alligator believed his words. The stupid creature thought, "I shall have to speak just as the house would speak or this tiresome little jackal will not come in."

He made his voice as small and soft as he could, and said, "All is well, little jackal."

Then the jackal knew that the alligator was in his house, and he was more scared than ever. However, he contrived to re-

spond in a cheerful voice: "All right, little house! I will come in as soon as I have been to the brook for a drink of water."

When the alligator heard these words he was filled with joy. He lay quite still under the leaves thinking: "Now I will have that little jackal at last. This time he shall not escape me."

But while he waited, the jackal gathered together a great heap of dead wood and brush and piled it against the door of the house. When it was big enough, the jackal set fire to the heap. It blazed up with a great noise, and the wicked alligator was burned to death.

Then the little jackal danced about singing:

"The alligator's dead, and I am glad!
Oh, ring-a-ting-a-ting; oh, ring-a-ting-ting!
The alligator's dead, and I am glad!"

After that the little jackal went wherever he pleased in safety, and he ate so many figs and so many crabs that he became as fat as fat could be.

VIII

THE BLIND OGRE

In Italy dwelt a woman named Janella who had eight children. Seven of them were sons, but the youngest was a daughter.

After the sons grew up they went off to see the world. They went on and on until they came to a wood in which dwelt an ogre. This ogre had been blinded by a woman while he lay asleep, and ever since then he had been such an enemy to womankind that he devoured all whom he could catch.

When the youths arrived at the ogre's house, tired out with walking, and faint with hunger, they begged him, for pity's sake, to give them something to eat.

The ogre replied that if they would serve him he would supply them with food.

They would have nothing else to do but watch over his safety, each in turn, a day at a time.

This seemed a very satisfactory arrangement to them, and they consented to remain in the service of the ogre. So he let them have all the lower part of the house to live in.

After the brothers had been gone from home a long time, and no tidings of them were received, Channa, their sister, dressed for a journey and went to seek them. On and on she walked, asking at every place she came to whether any one had seen her seven brothers. Finally she got news at an inn of where they were, and away she went to the ogre's house in the wood.

There she made herself known to her brothers and was received with great joy. After the greetings were over the youths told her to stay quietly in their part of the

house so the ogre would not be aware of her presence. They also cautioned her to give a portion of whatever she had to eat to a cat which lived there. Otherwise the cat would do her harm.

Channa heeded their advice and got along very well. She shared her food with the cat, always doing it fairly to the last morsel, and saying, "This for me—this for thee."

But one day when the ogre sent the brothers out to do some hunting they left Channa a little basket of peas to cook. While shelling the peas, she found a hazel nut among them, and as ill-luck would have it she ate the nut, forgetting to give half to the cat. The latter, out of spite, ran to the hearth and put out the fire.

Then Channa left the room and went upstairs to the blind ogre's part of the house. She asked him for a few coals, and when he heard a woman's voice he said: "Welcome,

madam! Just you wait a while." Afterward he began to sharpen his teeth with a whetstone.

She saw that she had made a mistake in not obeying her brother's orders, and she ran back to the room below. There she bolted the door and placed against it stools, tables, chests, and in fact everything she could move.

As soon as the ogre had put an edge on his teeth he groped his way to the door and found it fastened. So he proceeded to kick it to break it open. The seven brothers came home while he was making all this disturbance, and the ogre accused them of treachery.

Things might have gone badly had it not been for the cleverness of Grazio, the eldest, who said to the ogre: "She has fortified herself so securely inside that you cannot get at her. Come, I will take you to a

place where we can seize her without her being able to defend herself."

Then they led the ogre by the hand to the edge of a deep pit, where they gave him a push that sent him headlong to the bottom. After that they got shovels and covered him with earth.

By and by they returned to the house and Channa unfastened the door. They told her to be more careful in future, and to beware of plucking any grass or other plant that might grow on the spot where the ogre was buried, or they would be changed into doves.

"Heaven keep me from bringing such a misfortune on you!" Channa exclaimed.

They took possession of all the ogre's goods, made themselves masters of the whole house, and lived very comfortably and merrily there until spring. Then it happened one morning when the brothers had gone

off on some errand, that a poor pilgrim came to the ogre's wood. He was looking up at an ape perched in a pine tree when the creature threw a heavy cone at him. This struck him on the head so hard that the poor fellow set up a loud cry.

Channa heard the noise and ran to where he was sitting on the ground hanging on to his bruised head. She took pity on him and plucked a tuft of rosemary which was growing on the ogre's grave near by. Then she hurried to the house and made a plaster of it with bread and salt. In a few minutes she rejoined the pilgrim and bound the plaster on his head. After that she had him go with her to the house where she gave him some breakfast. When he finished eating she sent him on his way.

IX

SEVEN DOVES

SCARCELY had the pilgrim gone when seven doves came flying into the room, and said: "Behold your brothers turned to birds and made companions of snipes, woodpeckers, jays, owls, rooks, starlings, blackbirds, tomtits, larks, kingfishers, wrens, and sparrows. We shall be persecuted by hawks, and hunters will try to shoot us. Ah! why did you pluck that accursed rosemary and bring such a calamity on us? Doves we must remain for the rest of our lives unless you find the Mother of Time. She can tell you how to get us out of our trouble."

Channa was greatly distressed over what she had done, and said she would start at once searching for the Mother of Time.

She urged them to make the ogre's house their home until she returned.

Away she went and journeyed on and on until she came to the seashore, where the waves were banging against the rocks. A huge whale came to the surface close at hand, looked at her, and asked, "What are you seeking, my pretty maiden?"

She replied, "I am seeking the Mother of Time."

"Hear then what you must do," the whale said. "Go along the shore, and when you come to a river, follow it up to its source. There you will meet some one who will show you the way. But do me one kindness. After you have found the old woman, ask her how I can swim about safely without so often knocking on the rocks and being thrown up on the sands."

"I will gladly do that for you," Channa said.

Then she thanked the whale and walked on along the shore. At length she came to a river and followed it up to its source in a beautiful open country of meadows starred with flowers. There she met a mouse who said to her, "Where are you going all alone, my pretty maiden?"

"I am seeking the Mother of Time," Channa replied.

"You have a long way to go," the mouse commented. "But do not lose heart. Go to yonder mountain, and you will obtain more news to help you in your search. And when you find the Mother of Time, will you do me one favor? Ask her what we mice can do to get rid of the tyranny of the cats."

Channa promised to do this for the mouse, and trudged off toward the mountain. When she got to it she sat down on a stone to rest. Some ants were busy close by, and one of them addressed Channa, saying,

"Who are you and whither are you going?"

She answered, "I am an unhappy girl who is seeking the Mother of Time."

"Then keep on over the mountain to a large plain, and there you will get more news," the ant said. "After you find the old woman please ask her how the ants can live longer. We store up a great deal of food, and this seems to me a folly while our lives are so short."

"Be at ease," Channa responded. "You can be sure that I will do your errand."

Then she toiled on over the mountain to the great plain, where a wide-spreading old oak tree called to her as she was passing. "Whither are you going so sad, my little lady?" it said. "Come and rest in my shade."

She thanked the old oak, but begged to be excused from stopping because she was going in haste to find the Mother of Time.

"You are not far from her dwelling," the oak announced. "Before you have finished another day's journey you will get to a high mountain on the summit of which is the home of her whom you seek. If you have as much kindness as beauty you will oblige me by asking her why it is that my fruit which used to be relished by strong men is now only made the food of hogs."

"It will be a pleasure to do you such a service," Channa affirmed, and departed.

The next day she arrived at the foot of a mountain which had its summit far up among the clouds. There she found an old man, wearied and wayworn, who had lain down on some hay. The moment he saw Channa he knew her, for he was the pilgrim to whom she had ministered. When she told him what she was seeking he responded that at last he could make some return for her kindness.

"My pretty maiden," he said, "I would have you know that on the top of this mountain you will find a castle which was built so long ago that no one knows when it was built. The walls are cracked, the foundations are crumbling, the doors are worm-eaten, the furniture is worn out, and, in short, everything is gone to wrack and ruin.

"When you are almost to the castle, hide until Time goes out. After he has gone, enter, and you will find an old, old woman, whose face is covered with deep wrinkles, and whose eyebrows are so shaggy she will not be able to see you. She is seated on a clock which is fastened to the wall.

"Go in quickly and take off the weights that keep the machinery of the clock in motion. Then ask the old woman to answer your questions. She will instantly call her son to come and destroy you, but because you have stopped the clock by taking the

weights he cannot move. Therefore she will be obliged to tell you what you want to know."

X

TIME AND HIS MOTHER

WHEN the pilgrim finished speaking, Channa climbed the mountain and arrived in the vicinity of the castle quite out of breath. There she waited till Time came out. He was an old man with a long beard, he wore a cloak and carried a scythe, and he had large wings that bore him swiftly out of sight.

Channa now entered the castle, and though she gave a start of fright when she saw the strange old woman, she hastened to seize the weights of the clock and tell what she wanted.

The old woman at once called loudly to her son, but Channa said, "You will not see your son while I hold these clock-weights."

Thereupon the old woman began to coax Channa, saying: "Let go of them, my dear. Do not stop my son's course. No one has ever done that before. Let go of the weights, and may Heaven reward you."

"You are wasting your breath," Channa responded. "You must say something better than that if you would have me quit my hold."

"Well then," the old woman said, "hide behind the door, and when Time comes home I will make him tell me all you wish to know. As soon as he goes out again you can depart."

Channa let go the weights and hid behind the door. Presently Time came flying in, and his mother repeated to him the maiden's questions.

In reply he said: "The oak tree will be honored as it was of yore when men find the treasure that is buried among its roots.

The mice will never be safe from the cat unless they tie a bell to her neck to warn them when she is coming. The ants will live a hundred years if they will dispense with flying, for when an ant is going to die it puts on wings. The whale should make friends with the sea-mouse, who will serve as a guide so that the monster will never go astray. The doves will resume their former shape when they fly and alight on the column of riches."

So saying, Time went forth to run his accustomed race. Then Channa bade the old woman farewell and descended the mountain. She arrived at the foot just as the seven doves arrived there. Her long absence had made them anxious, and they had come to look for her. They alighted on the horn of a dead ox, and at once they changed to the handsome youths they had been formerly.

While they were marveling at this transformation Channa greeted them and told them what Time had said. Then they understood that the horn, as the symbol of plenty, was what he called the column of wealth.

Now they all started on the return journey, taking the same road by which Channa had come. When they arrived at the old oak and she informed the tree of what Time had said, the oak begged them to take away the treasure from its roots. So the seven brothers borrowed tools in a neighboring village and dug till they unearthed a great heap of gold money. This they divided into eight parts and shared it between themselves and their sister.

After according to the oak tree the honor it so much desired they again tramped along the homeward road, and when they became weary lay down to sleep under a hedge.

Presently they were seen there by a band of robbers who tied them hand and foot, and carried off their money.

They bewailed the loss of their wealth which had so soon slipped through their fingers, and they were anxious lest they should perish of starvation or be devoured by wild beasts. As they were lamenting their unhappy lot the mouse whom Channa had met appeared. She told it what Time had said about getting rid of the tyranny of the cats, and the grateful mouse nibbled the cords with which they were bound till it set them free.

Somewhat farther on they encountered the ant which listened eagerly while Channa repeated Time's advice. Then it asked her why she was so pale and downcast.

So she related how the robbers had tricked them.

"Cheer up," the ant said. "Now I can

requite the kindness you have done me. I know where those robbers hide their plunder. Follow me."

The ant guided them to a group of tumble-down houses and showed them a pit which the brothers entered. There they found the money which had been stolen from them, and off they went with it to the seashore. The whale came to speak with them, and was rejoiced to learn what Time had said.

While they were talking with the whale, they saw the robbers coming, armed to the teeth.

"Alas, alas!" they cried, "now we are lost."

"Fear not," the whale said. "I can save you. Get on my back and I will carry you to a place of safety."

Channa and her brothers climbed on the whale who carried them to within sight of Naples. There it left them on the shore and

they returned to their old home safe and sound and rich. Thereafter they enjoyed a happy life, in accord with the old saying, "Do all the good you can and make no fuss about it."

XI

BLOCKHEAD HANS

Far away in the country was an old mansion in which dwelt a squire well along in years and his two sons. These sons thought themselves exceedingly clever. Indeed, they were convinced that had they known only half of what they did know, it would have been quite enough.

Both wanted to marry the king's daughter. She had proclaimed that she would have for her husband the man who knew best how to choose his words, and they were confident that one or the other of them was certain to win her.

Only a week was allowed to prepare for the wooing, but that was plenty long enough for the two brothers. One knew the whole

Latin dictionary by heart. He also knew three years' issue of the daily paper of the town so he could repeat backward or forward as you pleased all that had appeared in it.

The other had studied the laws of corporation and thought he could speak with wisdom and authority on matters of state. Besides, he was very expert with his fingers and could embroider roses and other flowers or figures in a manner that gave his friends great pleasure.

The old father gave each of the sons a fine horse. He presented a black horse to the one who knew the dictionary and the daily paper by heart, and the other, who was so clever at corporation law, received a milk-white steed. Just before they started, the young men oiled the corners of their mouths that they might be able to speak more fluently.

The squire had a third son, but nobody thought him worth counting. He was not learned as his brothers were and was generally called "Blockhead Hans." While the servants stood in the courtyard watching the two clever youths mount their horses Hans chanced to appear.

"Well, well!" he said, "where are you off to? You are in your Sunday-best clothes."

"We are going to the royal court to woo the princess," they replied. "Haven't you heard what has been proclaimed throughout all the ccuntryside?"

They told him about it, and Hans shouted, "Hurrah! I'll go too." The brothers laughed at him and rode off.

"Dear father," Blockhead Hans said, "I must have a horse. Perhaps I can win the princess. If she will have me, she will. If she won't have me, she won't."

"Stop that nonsense!" the old man or-

dered. "I will not give you a horse. You can't speak wisely. You don't know how to choose your words. But your brothers—ah! they are very different lads."

"All right," Hans said, "I have a goat. If you won't give me a horse, the goat will have to serve instead. He can carry me."

So he put a bridle on his goat, got on its back, dug his heels into its sides and went clattering down the road like a hurricane. Hoppitty hop! What a ride!

"Here I come!" Blockhead Hans shouted, and he sang so that the echoes were roused near and far.

Once he stopped and picked up a dead crow. Presently he overtook his brothers as they rode slowly along on their fine horses. They were not speaking, but were turning over in their minds all the clever things they intended to say, for everything had to be thought out.

"Hello!" Blockhead Hans bawled, "here I am. Just see what I found on the road." And he proudly held up the dead crow for them to look at.

"You foolish lad," his brothers said, "what are you going to do with it?"

"I shall give it to the princess," he answered.

"Do so, certainly!" they said, laughing loudly and riding on.

Blockhead Hans thought he would continue the journey in their company, but he saw an old wooden shoe by the roadside. Such a prize was not to be neglected, and he got off his goat and picked it up. Then he cantered along the highway till he came up behind his brothers.

"Slap, bang! here I am!" he shouted. "See what I have just found? Such things are not to be picked up every day on the road!"

The brothers turned round to learn what in the world he could have found.

"Simpleton!" they said, "that cracked old shoe is absolutely worthless. Are you going to take that to the princess?"

"Of course I shall," Blockhead Hans replied, and the brothers laughed and rode along.

But the lad on the goat soon brought them to a standstill by hopping off his goat and shouting: "Hurrah! Here's the best treasure of all!"

"What have you found now?" the brothers asked.

"Oh! something more for the princess," he said. "How pleased she will be!"

"Why, that is pure mud, straight from the ditch!" the brothers exclaimed.

"Of course it is!" Blockhead Hans responded. "There never was any better mud. See how it runs through my fingers."

So saying, he filled his coat pocket with it. The brothers did not enjoy these interruptions or his company, and they rode off with such speed that they were hidden in a cloud of dust raised by their horses' hoofs. They reached the gate of the royal city a good hour before Blockhead Hans did.

XII

THE RIVAL SUITORS

EACH suitor for the hand of the princess was numbered as he arrived and had to wait his turn. They waited as patiently as they could, standing in line closely guarded to prevent the jealous rivals from getting into a fight with one another.

A crowd of people had gathered in the throne room at the palace to look on while the princess received her suitors, and as each suitor came in all the fine phrases he had prepared passed out of his mind. Then the princess would say: "It doesn't matter. Away with him!"

At last the brother who knew the dictionary by heart appeared, but he did not know it any longer. The floor creaked, and the

ceiling was made of glass mirrors so that he saw himself standing on his head. At one of the windows were three reporters and an editor, and each of them was writing down what was said to publish it in the paper that was sold at the street corners for a penny. All this was fearful. You couldn't blame him for feeling nervous.

"It is very hot in here, isn't it?" was the only thing that the brother who knew the dictionary could think of to say.

"Of course it is," the princess responded. "We are roasting young chickens for dinner today."

The youth cleared his throat. "Ahem!" There he stood like an idiot. He was not prepared for such remarks from the princess. How nice it would be to make a witty response! But he could think of nothing appropriate, and all he did was to clear his throat again. "Ahem!"

"It doesn't matter," the princess said. "Take him out." And out he had to go.

Now the other brother entered. "How hot it is here!" he said.

The princess looked as if she thought him tiresome as she responded: "Of course. We are roasting young chickens today."

"Where do you—um?" the youth stammered, and the reporters wrote down, "Where do you—um?"

"It doesn't matter," the princess said. "Take him out."

After a while Blockhead Hans had his turn. He rode his goat right into the room and exclaimed, "Dear me, how awfully hot it is here!"

The princess looked at him and his goat with more interest than she showed in most of her suitors and said: "Of course! We are roasting young chickens today."

"That's good," Blockhead Hans com-

mented; "and will you let me roast a crow with them?"

"Gladly," the princess responded; "but have you anything to roast it in? I have neither pot nor saucepan to spare."

"That's all right," Blockhead Hans told her. "Here is a dish that will serve my purpose." And he showed her the wooden shoe and laid the crow in it.

The princess laughed and said. "If you are going to prepare a dinner you ought at least to have some soup to go with your crow."

"Very true," he agreed, "and I have it in my pocket." Then he showed her the mud he was carrying.

"I like you," the princess declared. "You can answer when you are spoken to. You have something to say. So I will marry you. But do you know that every word we speak is being recorded and will be

in the paper tomorrow. Over by the window not far from where we are you can see three reporters and an old editor. None of them understands much and the editor doesn't understand anything."

At these words the reporters giggled, and each dropped a blot of ink on the floor.

"Ah! those are great people," Blockhead Hans remarked. "I will give the editor something to write about."

Then he took a handful of mud from his pocket and threw it smack in the great man's face.

"That was neatly done!" the princess said—"much better, in fact, than I could have done it myself."

She and Blockhead Hans were married, and presently he became king and wore a crown and sat on the throne. At any rate so the newspaper said, but of course you can't believe all you see in the papers.

XIII

CUNNING TOM

ONCE there was a bad boy named Tom, and the older he grew, the wiser and slyer he thought himself. Many were the tricks he played until no one liked him or trusted him.

One day he asked his grandmother for some money. She had plenty, but she would not give him any. So that evening Tom went to the pasture and caught the old woman's black cow. He took the cow to a deserted house which stood at a distance from any other, and there he kept her two or three days, giving her food and water at night when nobody would see him going and coming.

Tom made his grandmother believe that

some one had stolen the cow. This was a great grief to her. At last she told the lad to buy her another cow at a fair in a neighboring town, and she gave him three pounds with which to make the purchase.

He promised to get one as near like the other as possible and went off with the money. Then he took a piece of chalk, ground it into powder, steeped it in a little water and rubbed it in spots and patches over the head and body of the cow he had hidden.

Early the next morning he took her to an inn near the fair and spent the day in pleasure. Toward evening he drove the cow home before him, and as soon as he got to his grandmother's the cow began to bellow.

The old woman ran out rejoicing for she thought her own black cow had been found, but when she saw the spots and patches of white she sighed and exclaimed, "Alas,

you'll never be the kindly brute my Black Lady was, though you bellow exactly like her."

"'Tis a mercy you know not what the cow says," Tom remarked to himself, "or all would be wrong with me."

The old woman put her cow to pasture the following morning, but there came on a heavy shower of rain, which washed away the chalk. So the old woman's Black Lady came home at night and the new cow went away with the shower and was never heard of afterward.

But Tom's father had some suspicions, and he looked closely at the cow's face and found some of the chalk still remaining. Then he gave Tom a hearty beating and turned him out of the house.

Tom traveled about from place to place, and by hook or by crook contrived to make a living till he reached the size and years

of a man. He was always planning ways to get hold of other people's money, for he did not like to exert himself to earn what he needed.

Once he met a party of reapers seeking work. At once he hired the whole company of about thirty and agreed to give them a week's reaping at ten pence a day, which was two pence higher than any had gotten that year. This made the poor reapers think he was a very honest, generous, and genteel master.

Tom took them to an inn and gave them a hearty breakfast. "Now," he said, "there are so many of you together, it's quite possible that while most are honest men, some may be rogues. You will have to sleep nights together in a barn, and your best plan is to give what money you have to me to keep safe for you. I'll mark down each sum in a book opposite the name of the man

whose it is, and you shall have it all when I pay you your wages."

"Oh! very well, there's my money, and there's mine, and here's mine," they said.

Some gave him five, six, seven, and eight shillings, all they had earned through the harvest. Tom now went with them out of the village to a field of standing grain, remote from any house, and set the men at work. Then he left, telling them he was going to order dinner for them, but in reality he set off at top speed to get as far away from them as possible, lest, when they found out his trick, they should follow and overtake him.

Soon the farmer to whom the grain belonged saw the reapers in his field and came to ask what they were about. "Stop!" he cried, "I have given you no orders to reap this grain, and besides it is not ripe."

At first they persisted in keeping on with

the work, but finally the farmer convinced them that they had been fooled, and the reapers went away sorely lamenting their misfortune.

XIV

A MISER'S HIRED MAN

TOM escaped, but it was a rough life he led, and he was always in fear of punishment. for his many misdeeds. At last he concluded he had had enough of depending on his wits for a livelihood and decided he would go to work.

So he hired himself to an old miser of a farmer with whom he continued several years. On the whole he made a good servant, and though he sometimes played tricks on those about him, it was his habit to make good any damage he did.

His master was a miser, as I have said and he and his help ate supper with no other light than that of the fire, for he would not furnish candles. Tom did not like this, and

one night he thrust his spoon into the middle of the soup dish where the soup was hottest and clapped a spoonful into his master's mouth.

"You rascal!" his master cried, "my mouth is all burned."

"Then why do you keep the house so dark?" Tom asked. "I can't half see, and what wonder is it if I missed the way to my own mouth and got the spoon in your mouth, instead?"

After that they always had a candle on the table at supper, for his master would feed no more in the dark while Tom was present.

One day a butcher came and bought a fine fat calf from Tom's master. He tied its legs, took it on the horse's back in front of him, and off he went.

"Master," Tom said, "what do you say to playing a joke on that fellow? With your

leave I'll get that calf away from him before he has gone two miles, and he won't know what has become of it either."

"You can try," the master said, "but I don't believe you can do it."

So Tom went into the house, got a pretty shoe with a silver buckle to it that belonged to the servant maid and ran across a field till he got ahead of the butcher. He threw the shoe into the middle of the highway and hid behind a hedge. The butcher came riding along with the calf before him.

"Hey!" he said, "there's a fine lady's shoe. If it wasn't that this calf makes it a great trouble to get off and on I'd alight and pick the shoe up. But after all what is the use of one shoe without its neighbor?"

On he rode and let it lie. Tom then slipped out from behind the hedge, secured the shoe, and ran across the fields till he again got before the butcher. He threw the

shoe into the middle of the road and once more crouched behind the hedge and waited.

Along came the butcher, and saw the shoe. "Now," he said, "I can have a pair of good shoes for the lifting. I'll take them home and put my old woman in a good humor for once."

Down he got, lifted off the calf, tied his horse to the hedge, and ran back, thinking to get the other shoe. While he was gone Tom picked up the calf and the shoe and tramped off home.

The butcher did not find the shoe he went back to get, and when he returned to his horse the other shoe was gone and so was his calf. "No doubt the calf has broken the rope that was about its feet," he said, "and has run into the fields."

So he spent a long time searching for it amongst the hedges and ditches. Finally

he returned to Tom's master and told him a long story of how he had lost the calf by means of a pair of shoes, which he believed the devil himself must have dropped in the roadway and had picked up later and the calf too.

"I suppose I ought to be thankful," he said in concluding, "that I have my old horse left to carry me home so that I don't have to walk."

"Wouldn't you like to buy another calf?" Tom asked.

"Why, yes," the butcher responded, "if you have one to sell."

Tom then brought from the barn the very calf that the butcher had lost, but as Tom had made a fine white face on it with chalk and water, the butcher did not recognize it. So the sale was made, its legs were tied and it was hoisted onto the horse in front of the butcher. As soon as he was gone, Tom told

his master he believed he could get the calf again.

"Oh, no!" the farmer said, "you've fooled him once and he'll be on the lookout for mischief now. But you can try if you want to."

Away ran Tom through the fields until he got ahead of the butcher near where he had taken the calf from him. There he hid behind the hedges and as the butcher was passing he put his hand on his mouth and cried, "Baw, baw!" like a calf.

When the butcher heard this he stopped his horse. "There's the calf I lost," he said.

Down he got, lifted the calf from his horse to the ground, and scrambled hastily through the hedge, thinking he would lay his hands on the lost calf in a few moments. But as he went through one part of the hedge, Tom went through another, got the

calf on his back and hurried through the fields home.

The poor butcher spent his time in vain running hither and thither seeking his calf. At last he returned to his horse, and when he found his other calf gone he concluded the place was bewitched.

"Oh, misfortunate day!" he cried, "what shall I do now? and what'll Joan say when I get home, for my money's gone, and the two calves are gone, and I can't buy her the shawl I promised to get."

Back he went to the farmer lamenting his loss. But the farmer thought the joke had been carried far enough now. He told him what had happened and gave him his calf and the second payment of money. So the butcher went off well satisfied, for he had had a good deal of fun for his trouble, had he not?

XV

THE BOY IN A PEACH

It was the beginning of summer. On the bank of a river in Japan an old woman kneeled washing clothes. She took the clothes from a basket beside her and washed them in the water, which was so clear that you could plainly see the stones at the bottom and the dartings of the little minnows.

Presently there came floating down the stream a big round delicious-looking peach.

"Well," the woman said, "I am sixty years old, and never before have I seen so large and handsome a peach. It must be fine to eat."

She looked about for a stick with which to reach the peach, but saw none. For a moment she was perplexed. Then she

clapped her hands, and nodded her head while she sang these words:

"Far waters are bitter, near waters are sweet—
Leave the bitter, come to the sweet."

She sang the words three times, whereupon, strange to say, the peach rolled over and over in the water till it came to the shore in front of her.

"How delighted my old man will be!" she thought as she picked it up.

Then she packed the clothes she had been washing into the basket and hurried home. Soon she saw her husband returning from the mountain where he had been cutting grass. She ran to meet him and showed him the peach.

"Dear me!" the old man said, "it is wonderful. Where did you buy it?"

"Buy it? I did not buy it," she replied.

Then she told him how she got it from the river.

"I feel hungry," the old man affirmed. "Let us eat the peach at once."

They went to the house and got a knife. But just as the old man was about to cut the peach he heard a child's clear voice say, "Good sir, wait!"

Instantly the peach split in two halves, and out danced a little boy less than six inches high. This was so unexpected that the man and woman nearly fainted with astonishment and fright.

"Do not be afraid," the boy said. "You have often lamented that you have no child, and I have been sent to be your son."

The old couple were very much pleased, and they did all they could to show how welcome he was to their home. Peach-boy was the name they gave him. The years passed, and he grew to be a man remarkable for his

beauty, his courage, and, above all, for his great strength.

One day he came to the old man and old woman and said: "Father, your kindness has been higher than the mountain on which you cut grass; and Mother, yours has been deeper than the river in which you wash clothes. How can I thank you?"

"Do not thank us," the old man replied. "The time will come when we cannot work, and then we shall be dependent on you."

"But as things are," Peach-boy said, "I am so greatly indebted to you that I hesitate to make a request that is in my mind."

"What is it?" they questioned.

"It is that you allow me to go away for a short time," he answered.

"Go away? Where to?" they asked.

"I would have you know," he said, "that north of the mainland of Japan is an island inhabited by demons, who kill our people

and steal our treasure. I want to destroy them and bring back all their stolen riches. For this purpose I wish to leave you."

The old man was at first speechless with astonishment, but as he considered the matter he was convinced that Peach-boy was not mortal in his origin and therefore was probably safe from injury.

So he said: "You wish to go, and I will not stop you. Indeed, as those demons are the enemies of Japan, the sooner you destroy them and save your country from their depredations the better."

Preparations for Peach-boy's journey began at once. The old woman made him some dumplings and got his clothes ready. When the time came for him to start, the old couple saw him off with tears in their eyes.

"Take care of yourself. May you return victorious," they said.

XVI

A WARRIOR'S HELPERS

PEACH-BOY walked steadily and rapidly along the highway from early morning until midday, when he sat down to eat his dinner. Just as he took out one of the dumplings, a big savage dog appeared.

"Wow! wow!" the dog barked. "You have come into my territory without leave. If you do not at once give me your dinner I will devour you."

Peach-boy smiled scornfully. "I am on my way to fight the enemies of Japan," he said. "Don't try to stop me or I will slay you."

"I did not know the purpose of your journey," the dog responded, cowering and put-

ting his tail between his legs. "I humbly beg your pardon for my rude conduct. Please allow me to accompany and help you."

"You are welcome to go with me," Peach-boy said.

"But I am very hungry," the dog told him. "Will you please give me something to eat?"

"Here is a dumpling for you," was Peach-boy's response.

When the dog had eaten the dumpling they hurried on. They crossed many mountains and valleys, and one day a monkey sprang down from a tree in front of them and asked, "Where are you going so fast?"

"We are going to fight the enemies of Japan," Peach-boy answered.

"Then pray allow me to go with you," the monkey said.

The dog came angrily forward. "Of

what use would you be?" he snarled. "I alone accompany this great warrior."

Monkeys and dogs never can be friends, and of course this speech made the monkey very angry.

"You think a great deal of yourself!" he screeched, and he approached the dog ready to assail him with his teeth and nails.

But Peach-boy stepped between them, saying: "Stop! Do not be so hasty, you two. Stand back, dog. This monkey is not a bad fellow, and I intend to enrol him as one of my vassals."

Then he gave the monkey half a dumpling to eat. Presently the three went on along the highway. But it was no easy matter to keep the peace between the dog and the monkey. So at last Peach-boy had the monkey march ahead of him with his standard, and the dog follow behind him carrying his sword.

At length they entered a wilderness, and a wonderful bird sprang up from the ground as if to assail them. The bird's head plumage was of the deepest crimson and his body was clothed with a feather robe in five colors.

The dog dashed at the bird to seize and devour him, but Peach-boy sprang forward and prevented this. Then he said: "Bird, do you wish to interrupt my journey? If so, the dog shall bite off your head. But if you submit to me you can be one of my company and help fight the enemies of Japan."

The bird instantly bowed in front of Peach-boy, saying, "I am a humble bird called the pheasant. It would be an honor to accompany you on such an expedition."

"Does this low fellow go with us?" the dog growled disdainfully.

"That is no business of yours," Peach-boy said; "and I give you three animals

warning that if any quarreling starts among you I will send you all back that very moment. In war a good position is better than good luck, but union is better than either good luck or good position. There can be no squabbling among ourselves if we are to win."

The three animals listened respectfully and promised implicit obedience. Then the pheasant ate a half dumpling that Peachboy gave him, and the four went on together.

XVII

THE ISLAND OF DEMONS

At last Peach-boy and his companions came to the sea. They looked off across the water in the direction which he told them the island lay whose demon inhabitants he and they were to destroy, and saw nothing but waves. The dog, the monkey, and the pheasant are all creatures that live on dry land, and though the steepest cliff and deepest valley could not frighten them, yet when they saw that endless stretch of rolling waves, they stood speechless and fearful.

Peach-boy observed this and said in a loud voice: "My vassals, why do you tremble? Does the ocean frighten you? It would have been better to have come alone than to have picked up such companions.

But now I will dismiss you. Return!"

They were much pained at hearing these reproaches, and they clung to him beseeching him not to send them away. Apparently they were plucking up courage, and he consented to retain them.

He had them help prepare a boat, and they set sail with the first favorable wind. The shore behind them was soon lost to sight, and for a while the animals were very unhappy. But they gradually became accustomed to the motion and presently stood on deck eagerly looking ahead to see the island as soon as it came into view. When they wearied of that they began to show their accomplishments. The dog sat up and begged, the monkey played tricks, and the pheasant sang a song.

Their performances greatly amused Peach-boy, and before he knew it the island was close at hand. On it he could see nu-

merous flags fluttering above what seemed to be an impregnable fortress. This fortress had a heavy gate of iron, and inside were many closely-crowded houses, all of which had iron roofs.

Peach-boy turned to the pheasant and said: "You have wings. Fly to the fortress and find out what those island demons are doing."

The pheasant promptly obeyed his orders and found the demons, some of them red, some black, some blue, assembled on the iron roofs of their houses. "Listen, you island demons!" the pheasant cried. "A mighty warrior is coming with an army to destroy you. If you wish to save your lives, yield at once."

"You vain pheasant!" the demons laughed, "it is you who will be destroyed—not us."

So saying, they shook their horns at him,

girded up their garments of tiger-skin, and seized their weapons. But that did not scare the pheasant. He swooped down and with one peck took off the head of a red demon.

Then began a fierce battle, and soon the gate burst open, and Peach-boy with the dog and monkey rushed in raging like lions. The demons, who thought that they only had to do with one bird, were much alarmed, yet they fought bravely, and even their children joined in the fray. The sound of their yells as it mingled with the sound of the waves beating on the shore was truly terrible.

In the end they got the worst of it. Some fell from the roofs of their houses, the walls of the fortress, and the wild cliffs, and some were killed by the irresistible onslaughts of Peach-boy, and of the dog, the monkey, and the pheasant.

When, at last, only the head demon remained alive, he threw away his weapons,

and knelt in submission before Peach-boy with the tears streaming down his cheeks. "Great warrior," he said, "spare my life! From today I shall reform. Spare me!"

Peach-boy laughed scornfully. "You villain!" he cried, "for many years you have persecuted and killed innocent people; and now that your own life is in danger you beg for mercy and promise to reform. You deserve no mercy, and shall receive none."

So the head demon shared the fate of the rest of his tribe, and Peach-boy and his comrades loaded their boat with the hoarded island treasures. There were coral and tortoise and pearls, not to speak of magic hats and coats that made their wearers invisible.

All these things they carried away, and great was the joy of the old man and old woman when they saw Peach-boy return victorious. After that he and they lived happily to the end of their days.

If you have enjoyed these stories you will want to read the other books in the series.

Bluebeard
The Sleeping Beauty
Tom Thumb
The Pied Piper
St. George and the Dragon

Characte

dtime Wonder Tales."